



## Committee on Foreign Affairs

CHAIRMAN ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN



### Ros-Lehtinen Statement at Hearing on U.S. Nonproliferation Policy

(WASHINGTON) – U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, made the following opening statement at a hearing this morning entitled, “The Global Nuclear Revival and U.S. Nonproliferation Policy:”

“The tragedy in Japan continues to dominate the news. The scale of the devastation and suffering is unimaginable. Even though we watch in safety from the other side of the planet, I believe I speak for all of the Committee members in saying that our hearts and thoughts are with the people of Japan during this terrible crisis, especially those who have lost loved ones and those whose lives have been unexpectedly upended and filled with despair.

“That ongoing situation is of direct relevance to today’s hearing. Many are already predicting that the global nuclear revival now underway will be stopped in its tracks by the images of exploding nuclear reactors, terrified refugees, and the prospect of huge areas rendered uninhabitable.

“These events have already begun to influence the debate over nuclear energy in the U.S. and Europe. However, China and other countries, especially in the Middle East, are unlikely to be deterred from their nuclear ambitions. And it is in these countries pursuing nuclear power for political aims, many for destructive goals, that the risk of proliferation is the greatest.

“Rogue nations attempting to build a nuclear weapons program need a nuclear energy program to use as cover. We can be certain that the crisis in Japan will not persuade the Iranian regime to abandon its nuclear weapons program. Nor should we expect North Korea to dismantle its recently revealed uranium enrichment program due to concerns that an accident could devastate the nearby population.

“But the nuclear menace we face is broader than simply that of traditional nuclear weapons. The crisis in Japan is a dramatic demonstration of the real-world threat resulting from nuclear material over which we have lost control. A radiological bomb that uses conventional explosives to disperse radioactive materials is a far more achievable goal for al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations than a nuclear device.

“We know that these groups are actively seeking these materials and have also targeted nuclear installations for destruction in the hope of spreading nuclear devastation. So the

prospect of sudden and widespread nuclear contamination in far-away Japan should remind us that we face an even greater threat from our self-proclaimed enemies, who are even now planning to unleash it in the centers of our cities.

“The crisis in Japan also shows us that even a country at the highest level of development, with massive resources and legions of technicians, scientists, and officials, may be unable to prevent a catastrophe. Therefore, spreading nuclear facilities to unstable regimes throughout the Middle East and the Third World, which often have only limited resources and expertise, is laying the groundwork for potential disaster and a vast expansion of proliferation opportunities.

“Russia and France are the most irresponsible in this regard, with their most senior officials acting as salesmen for their state-owned nuclear corporations. But we are not innocent ourselves. At a minimum we should not be contributing to the problem with politically-driven nuclear cooperation agreements.

“The Atomic Energy Act, which governs these agreements, was written in an era when safe, clean nuclear energy was the hope of the future and proliferation concerns were minimal. Over the years, tougher provisions have been written into the Act, but the situation remains far from satisfactory.

“A key problem is that Congress has little influence, largely because these agreements automatically go into effect unless those seeking to stop them can secure veto-proof majorities in both houses, a high hurdle indeed. But when writing the law, Congress never intended for our long-term national security interests to be made subordinate to short-term political concerns.

“Congress must act to fix this problem, especially by requiring that nuclear cooperation agreements receive an affirmative vote before going into effect. I plan to introduce legislation to give Congress that power and also to strengthen the non-proliferation provisions in all future nuclear cooperation agreements. Several other members on both sides of the aisle are considering similar legislation, and I hope to work with them to craft a bipartisan bill that can be passed by this Committee quickly and, hopefully, unanimously.

“The crisis in Japan has also graphically demonstrated that the nuclear threat we face is far more than that simply of accidents at electricity plants. We have enemies—non-state actors and rogue regimes – who are working to bring about an even greater disaster here, not as an act of God, but instead of conscious design. Our laws and our policies must address this threat before it is too late.”

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